

## **AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS**

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the application:

### **Listing of Claims:**

Claims 1 -6 (canceled)

Claim 7 (previously presented) A thickening agent comprising a fruit or vegetable mixture of two portions of one or more PME-comprising fruits or vegetables, said thickening agent being obtainable by a process comprising the steps of

- i) preparing a first and a second portion of the fruits or vegetables;
- ii) PME-deactivating the first portion;
- iii) combining the first and the second portion in a weight ratio of from 1:9 to 9:1 to form the fruit or vegetable mixture;

wherein the fruits or vegetables are comminuted at one or more of steps i)-iii), and wherein the fruits selected from bananas, apples, oranges, pineapples, edible berries, cherries or mixtures thereof and wherein the vegetables are selected from the group consisting of root vegetables, stem vegetables, leafstalk vegetables, bulb vegetables, immature flower vegetables, leaf vegetables, tuber vegetables, bud vegetables, seed vegetables and mixtures thereof; and further comprising

- iv) at least one drying step; and

wherein said thickening agent is dry and wherein said thickening agent has a particle size between 0.2 mm and 15 mm.

8-9. (canceled)

Claim 10 (Previously Presented) A method for reducing the perceived acidity of a product by incorporating into that product 0.5 to 95% by weight based on the weight of the product of the thickening agent according to claim 7.

Claim 11 (currently amended) A product comprising 0.5% to 95% by weight based on the product of the thickening agent according to claim 7 and about 0.5% to 50% by weight of edible salt; wherein the product is an emulsion.

Claim 12 (canceled)

Claim 13 (Previously Presented) The product according to claim 11 wherein the product is a food product.

Claim 14 (canceled)

Claim 15 (Original) The product according to claim 11 14, wherein the emulsion is an oil-in-water emulsion.

Claim 16 (New) A process for thickening a liquid or pourable product comprising the steps of

- i) preparing a first and a second portion of one or more PME-comprising fruits or vegetables;
- ii) PME-deactivating the first portion;
- iii) combining the first and the second portion in a weight ratio of about 2:8 to about 8:2 to form a fruit or vegetable mixture;
- iv) incorporating the fruit or vegetable mixture in the product to be thickened, wherein the fruits or vegetables are comminuted at one or more of steps i)-iii), and wherein the fruits are selected from bananas, apples, oranges, pineapples, edible berries,

cherries or mixtures thereof and wherein the vegetables are selected from the group consisting of onions, carrots, celery, celeriac, and mixtures thereof.

Claim 17 (New) A process for thickening a liquid or pourable product consisting essentially of the steps of

i) preparing a first and a second portion of one or more PME-comprising fruits or vegetables; wherein the first and the second portion are from the same vegetable or fruit species; wherein the fruits are selected from bananas, apples, oranges, pineapples, edible berries, cherries or mixtures thereof and wherein the vegetables are selected from the group consisting of onions, carrots, celery, celeriac, and mixtures thereof;

ii) PME-deactivating the first portion;

iii) combining the first and the second portion in a weight ratio of about 2:8 to about 8:2 to form a fruit or vegetable mixture;

wherein the fruits or vegetables are comminuted at one or more of steps i)-iii);

iv) drying the fruit or vegetable mixture to form a dried fruit or vegetable mixture;

v) incorporating the dried fruit or vegetable mixture in the product to be thickened.